ARA Press Guidance
February 4, 1992

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VENEZUELA: ATTEMPTED COUP

Q. What is the situation in Venezuela?

A. -- SHORTLY BEFORE MIDNIGHT LAST NIGHT CARACAS TIME, ELEMENTS OF THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY ATTEMPTED A VIOLENT ATTACK AGAINST THE DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ. TROOPS LOYAL TO THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY. PRESIDENT PEREZ WAS ON TELEVISION THROUGH THE NIGHT. VENEZUELAN POLITICAL LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM ALSO PUBLICLY DEFENDED THE CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER. PRESIDENT PEREZ' GOVERNMENT IS GAINING CONTROL AND BELIEVES THE REBELLION IS BEING CONTAINED.

-- THE STATE DEPARTMENT ISSUED A STRONG STATEMENT LAST NIGHT CONDEMNING THIS VIOLENT ASSAULT ON VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY AND STATING COMPLETE U.S. SUPPORT. AFTER BEING INFORMED OF THE REBELLION BY SECRETARY BAKER AT APPROXIMATELY 2:00 A.M., PRESIDENT BUSH PHONED PRESIDENT PEREZ LAST NIGHT AND STATED OUR FIRM SUPPORT.

Lot 94 D065
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PGOV-Coup Attempt
1992

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN
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Q. Did we contemplate military assistance?

A. -- PRESIDENT PEREZ SPOKE LAST NIGHT TO PRESIDENT BUSH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARONSON AND OUR AMBASSADOR, MICHAEL SKOL. IN EACH OF THESE CONVERSATIONS WE ASKED HOW WE COULD HELP. PRESIDENT PEREZ ASKED FOR A STATEMENT OF SUPPORT, WHICH WE ISSUED. HE DID NOT ASK FOR ANY OTHER FORM OF ASSISTANCE.

Q. Was a task force set up?

A. -- NO. THE SITUATION IS BEING MONITORED BY THE OPERATIONS CENTER AND THE BUREAU OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS.

Q. When was Perez elected?

A. -- HE WAS ELECTED IN DECEMBER 1988 AND INAUGURATED IN FEBRUARY 1989.

Q. Do we give military and economic aid to Venezuela?

A. -- WE PROVIDE NO MATERIAL AID TO THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY. WE HAVE A SMALL TRAINING PROGRAM -- THE REQUEST FOR THIS YEAR'S PROGRAM IS $175,000.

-- WE PROVIDE NO ECONOMIC AID TO VENEZUELA.

Q. Did the U.S. train the rebellious troops?

A. -- WE DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHO THE REBELS ARE. HOWEVER, OUR TRAINING PROGRAM IS VERY SMALL COMPARED TO PROGRAMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND COMPARED TO THE SIZE OF THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY. THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY TRAINS MILITARY PERSONNEL IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA.

Q. What does this say about democracy in Latin America?

A. -- DEMOCRACY IS WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE THE ONLY LEGITIMATE FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN THIS HEMISPHERE. HOWEVER, THERE REMAIN THREATS TO DEMOCRACY, FROM MILITARISTS OF THE LEFT, AS IN PERU, COLOMBIA AND GUATEMALA, OR FROM MILITARISTS OF THE RIGHT OR ULTRA-NATIONALISTS, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN HAITI AND VENEZUELA.

Q. Where is Haitian President Aristide?

A. -- WE UNDERSTAND HE IS IN CARACAS.

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